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Gender pay gap

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GENDER PAY GAP

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For years feminists have been fighting for equal rights among women and minorities. Although many of these battles have been won, equal pay in the workplace continues to cause problems regardless of the legislation in place to counter it.

Differences in the pay gap have been attributed to personal and professional characteristics such as education level,

preferred hours of work, potential maternity leave, and the particular occupation. But, there are also discriminatory characteristics such as gender stereotypes or customer and employer bias.

Gender stereotypes originated from gender roles. During the 19th century Victorian Era women typically worked in the household while men were the primary breadwinners. Women cooked, cleaned and tended to the kids. Men worked all day to come back to a home-cooked

meal and submissive wives and children. These rules that had been established determined a woman's role in society and limited their participation in it as well. They couldn't vote, but were forced to pay taxes on issues in which they had no representation.

These stereotypes have played a major role in discrimination against women and minorities. Ideas such as women are not as strong as men, women are more emotional than men or even women should not hold power positions have had major effects outside the workplace. Young girls often grow up believing these stereotypes because it is reinforced in a school or home setting.

Customer and employee bias is also reinforced by these false notions. Male clients often do not trust women to make the right decision for them and instead request that they are aided by a male employee.

There are two sides to the pay gap: unadjusted and adjusted. The unadjusted aspect, also called raw, does not have to do with the personal or workplace characteristics between men and women. The adjusted aspect is the discriminatory side, where the wage gap cannot be explained by specific variables.

The gender pay gap in the United States is measured as the female to male median yearly earnings for a full-time, year-round worker. Currently, a woman makes 77 cents to every dollar that a male makes. Since 1980, the gap has narrowed by 16.8 cents, increasing from 60.2 cents to 77 cents, as stated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research in 2009.

There are currently three federal statutes that work together to attempt to ensure the elimination of the gender pay gap. The first, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, simply aimed at eliminating wage discrimination based on sex.

The second statute, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, took the 1963 act a step further by attempting to eradicate discrimination based not only sex, but race, ethnicity, nationality and religion as well.

The last one, The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, was signed into law by President Obama on January 29. It was in answer to the Ledbetter vs. Goodyear Tire

Co. Supreme Court decision that stated that the statute of limitations for presenting an equal-pay lawsuit begins on the date that the employer makes the initial discriminatory wage decision, not at the date of the most recent paycheck. The act amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 stating that the

**CURRENTLY, A WOMAN
MAKES 77¢ TO EVERY DOLLAR
THAT A MALE MAKES.**

180-day statute of limitations for filing an equal-pay lawsuit regarding pay discrimination resets with each new discriminatory paycheck.



THE GENDER PAY GAP
PROVES TO BE DETRIMENTAL
TO WOMEN



In June of this year, Republicans voted against the Democratic-led legislation aimed at closing the gender pay gap. The vote was 52-47. Republicans thought that the previous acts, which include the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, were enough protection and the new legislation would only cause unnecessary litigation in courts.

According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2010 the median income of a male full-time, year-round worker was \$42,800. For a female full-time, year-round worker it was \$34,700.

That is a difference of \$8,100 per year. In four years, that is a difference of \$32,400. And in ten years, that is a difference of \$81,000.

Now just think about this. That pay difference would not only mean more financial support for your family, but it could potentially be a better living situation, better life insurance, healthier food choices for a family or even a new car.

As students, there are a few things we can be working towards in order to close the gender pay gap. First, you can contact your Iowa Senate representatives. Chuck Grassley and Tom Harkin were voted to

represent us nationally in Congress so that we all could have our voices heard. Visit their websites and send them a quick message about your concerns regarding the gender pay gap. Let them know that the legislation going through congress concerning this topic should be passed.

Yes, women have come a very long way since the beginning of feminism and the fight for equality. However, the gender pay gap proves to be extremely detrimental to women and minorities nationwide. It is crucial to the future of our country that every citizen is able earn the same wage for the same work. Equal opportunity is a happy America, friends.